EXCLUSIVE

BONUS Epilogue

Falling For The Billionaire

BY

ALISON REID

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Twenty Years Later…

Warm golden light spilled from the chandeliers of the Kingsley estate, drifting through the open French doors and across the sweeping terrace overlooking the ocean. Music floated softly through the tropical evening air while laughter, conversation, and the distant rush of waves wrapped around the celebration like something timeless.

The Kingsley home had hosted presidents, royalty, billionaires, and diplomats over the years.

Tonight, however, it belonged entirely to family.

Aurelia stood near the terrace railing with a champagne flute in her hand, watching the lanterns flicker across the gardens below. The ocean breeze lifted strands of her hair from her shoulders, and for one peaceful moment she simply absorbed the warmth surrounding her.

Twenty years.

Sometimes it still stunned her.

"You disappeared."

The deep voice against her ear sent warmth rushing through her instantly. Julian slid an arm around her waist from behind, drawing her back against his chest with effortless familiarity. Even after two decades, his touch still had the power to make her pulse stumble.

"I was gone for less than five minutes," she murmured, smiling as she tilted her head back against his shoulder.

"For me, that qualifies as disappearing."

Aurelia laughed softly. Across the terrace, Sarah nearly choked on her champagne.

"Oh my God," Julian's younger sister announced loudly. "He's still unbearable."

Helen burst into laughter beside her husband. "Honestly, Aurelia, at this point we should probably organise therapy for him."

Jason grinned. "Too late. The man's been obsessed since day one."

Julian didn't even look embarrassed. Instead, he calmly tightened his arm around Aurelia's waist and kissed the side of her temple with slow, lazy affection.

"Correct," he said smoothly.

Aurelia felt herself blush despite the years between them. That had never changed either.

Helen shook her head dramatically. "See? This is exactly what I mean. Twenty years later and he still looks at her like she personally invented oxygen."

"She basically did," Sarah informed everyone solemnly.

Graham laughed outright from nearby, one arm around Heidi as they watched their son with obvious amusement.

"It's true," Graham said dryly. "The boy was impossible before Aurelia came along."

Heidi's eyes softened as they rested on Aurelia.

"And now he smiles," she said quietly.

The affection in her voice made Aurelia's chest tighten unexpectedly. Twenty years ago she had arrived on Kaliah Island exhausted, grieving,

frightened, and completely alone. Somehow, impossibly, these people had become her family. Heidi crossed the terrace and took Aurelia's hand briefly.

"You made him happy," she said simply. "I don't think any mother could ask for more than that."

Julian's gaze shifted immediately toward his mother, something softer moving behind his steel-grey eyes. Then he looked back at Aurelia with that same unbearable intensity he had carried since the beginning.

"No," he corrected quietly. "She gave me everything."

Aurelia's throat tightened. Even now, after all these years, Julian could still do that to her. Strip away every defence with a single sentence.

"Oh God," Sarah muttered dramatically. "Now I'm emotional."

"You're always emotional," Helen informed her.

"Only because this family refuses to communicate normally."

Near the staircase, William snorted quietly into his drink.

At nineteen, their son already carried far too much of Julian in him — tall, dark-haired, broad-shouldered, and dangerously observant. Women noticed him constantly, although most approached with caution after encountering the same cool Kingsley stare his father was famous for.

But where Julian's intensity could feel cold to strangers, William's protectiveness was openly visible whenever it came to his mother.

Especially when another man paid her too much attention. It happened often enough that the family had begun anticipating it. Some wealthy businessman or politician would linger too long beside Aurelia, smiling a little too warmly, enjoying her attention a little too much. Then William would quietly appear.

"Careful," Clair would whisper beside her brother with amusement sparkling in her eyes. "You're doing the scary stare again."

William would ignore her completely. Moments later he would smoothly cross the room and interrupt with perfect politeness.

"Mother," he would say calmly, "Dad's looking for you."

Most of the time, Julian absolutely was not looking for her. Tonight proved no different.

Aurelia blinked up at her son suspiciously. "Your father is?"

"Yes," William replied with complete composure. "Desperately."

Across the terrace, Julian looked over at that exact moment, instantly recognising what was happening. A slow grin spread across his face.

"Ah," he drawled lazily. "Yes. Desperately."

The men surrounding Aurelia glanced between father and son before wisely excusing themselves. Sarah burst out laughing.

"Oh my God. He's trained his son."

"He absolutely has," Helen agreed.

Aurelia stared at William in disbelief. "William Kingsley."

"What?" he asked innocently.

"You're impossible."

"He gets it from his father," Sarah said immediately.

"Without question," Helen added.

"My son has my back," he said smoothly.

William lifted his glass slightly toward him. "Always."

Aurelia shook her head, although laughter tugged helplessly at her mouth.

"You two are ridiculous."

Julian directed his gaze to hers, utterly unconcerned.

"And yet," he murmured softly, "you like us anyway."

That devastating smile appeared — the one that had ruined her life in the most spectacular way possible twenty years earlier — and Aurelia felt her heart betray her all over again.

"Unfortunately," Aurelia agreed.

Clair slipped easily into the space beside Aurelia then, linking her arm through her mother's with unmistakable affection.

At fifteen, she adored both her parents with wholehearted intensity, though everyone knew she worshipped Julian a little. She watched him constantly — the way he touched Aurelia absentmindedly whenever she came near, the way his expression changed for nobody else, the way he still looked at his wife like a man catastrophically in love. To Clair, it was the standard by which all romance would forever be measured.

"You know," she said quietly to Aurelia, "Dad still watches you when you're not looking."

Julian heard that.

"Of course I do," he replied calmly.

Clair sighed dreamily. "See? That's exactly what I mean."

Aurelia laughed as Julian finally crossed the terrace toward her again, utterly unconcerned by the attention or teasing surrounding him.

He stopped directly in front of her, his gaze lingering over her face with quiet intensity. The noise of the party seemed to fade slightly around them.

Twenty years later and he still looked at her like she was something extraordinary.

"You're staring again," she murmured softly.

"I know."

His hand slid against her waist possessively, familiarly, lovingly. Then, with family watching and the ocean glittering behind them, Julian lowered his head and kissed his wife slowly.

Not politely.

Not briefly.

But like a man still devastatingly in love with the woman who had once stumbled half-starved into his world and somehow become the centre of it.

When he finally lifted his head, Sarah groaned loudly.

"Honestly. Get a room."

Julian never looked away from Aurelia.

"I already have one," he said lazily. "With my wife in it."

Graham laughed so hard he nearly spilled his drink while Heidi hid her smile behind her champagne glass.

And Aurelia — surrounded by family, wrapped in Julian's arms, loved so fiercely it still stole her breath — realised that after twenty years, she was still falling for the billionaire.

A movement beside her drew her attention.

William stepped quietly to her side, tall enough now that she had to tilt her head slightly to look at him properly. For one impossible moment she saw flashes of the little boy he had once been layered over the man he was becoming.

Her beautiful son.

Her throat tightened instantly.

"You're thinking too loudly again, Mum," William said softly, clearly reading her expression.

Aurelia laughed shakily before reaching up to touch his face.

“I’m going to miss you desperately,” she admitted quietly. “Sydney is very far away.”

William’s expression softened immediately.

At nineteen, he carried so much of Julian in him — the calm authority, the intelligence, the protective instincts — but moments like this belonged entirely to Aurelia. The gentleness. The tenderness

“I’ll miss you too,” he said honestly.

That nearly undid her. Tears burned suddenly behind her eyes, and she blinked quickly before they could spill.

“Oh no,” Sarah announced from across the terrace. “Aurelia’s crying. Now I’m going to cry.”

“You cry during commercials,” Helen informed her.

Clair appeared beside her mother instantly, slipping an arm around her waist before hugging her tightly.

“He’ll visit, Mum,” she said reassuringly, resting her cheek briefly against Aurelia’s shoulder.

“I know,” Aurelia whispered emotionally, pulling Clair closer too. “But you’re both so precious to me… and your father.”

At that, Julian stepped forward immediately. His hand settled against the back of Aurelia’s neck with instinctive possessiveness and affection, his thumb brushing softly beneath her ear.

“We’re not losing him,” he said quietly.

William smiled faintly. “I’m literally going to university, Dad. Not war.”

“That remains to be seen,” Julian replied evenly.

Clair burst out laughing.

“Oh my God,” she said. “You’re actually serious.”

Julian ignored her completely, his gaze still fixed on Aurelia.

“You’ll fly down whenever you want,” he told her calmly. “Or he’ll come home. Frequently.”

William lifted an eyebrow. “That sounded less like a suggestion and more like a boardroom directive.”

“It was both,” Julian informed him.

Heidi smiled softly as she watched them, emotion brightening her eyes.

For all Julian’s power, influence, and relentless control, there had never been anything he loved more fiercely than his family.

Especially Aurelia.

Aurelia leaned slightly into her husband’s touch, surrounded by her children, by laughter, by warmth, by the family she had never expected to have.

And Julian — standing beside her exactly as he always had — looked at her with the same devastating love he had carried from the very beginning.

The sight of it still had the power to steal Aurelia’s breath. A sharp tap against crystal cut gently through the laughter and conversation surrounding them.

Graham stood near the centre of the terrace, one hand holding his champagne glass while the other rested lightly against Heidi’s waist. Slowly, conversations faded as family and friends turned toward him.

The warm tropical evening settled around the gathering, lantern light flickering across smiling faces.

Graham looked first at Julian. Then at Aurelia. And something softened visibly in his expression.

“Well,” he drawled dryly, “against all odds, my son has managed to survive twenty years of marriage.”

Laughter rippled instantly across the terrace.

Julian rolled his eyes faintly. "You gave a speech at our wedding too," he informed his father. "It was equally insulting."

"Yes," Graham replied calmly. "And yet remarkably accurate."

More laughter followed.

Beside him, Heidi shook her head affectionately before resting her hand over his. Graham's gaze returned to Aurelia, becoming gentler.

"But in all seriousness…" His voice deepened slightly. "There are moments in life when you realise someone has changed your family forever."

Aurelia felt Julian's hand tighten around hers.

"When Aurelia first came into our lives, I don't think any of us understood how important she would become to this family." Graham smiled faintly. "Although Julian became fairly impossible almost immediately, so perhaps we should have guessed."

Sarah snorted loudly into her drink.

"Honestly, he never stood a chance," Helen added.

Julian ignored both sisters completely, his attention never really leaving Aurelia.

Graham continued, quieter now.

"Family matters more than money. More than influence. More than any success this world can offer." His eyes moved toward William and Clair briefly before returning to Julian and Aurelia. "And the life the two of you have built together… the love in this family… that is something very rare."

Aurelia's throat tightened painfully.

Beside her, Julian's thumb moved slowly across her knuckles in absentminded comfort, as though he could already feel her emotions building.

“You made my son happy,” Graham said simply to Aurelia. “And you gave this family two extraordinary children. Heidi and I could not possibly love you more if you had been born a Kingsley.”

Tears filled Aurelia’s eyes instantly. Heidi smiled at her warmly, eyes suspiciously bright too. Graham lifted his glass then.

“So here’s to love. To family. To twenty years of stubborn devotion, terrifying levels of mutual obsession, and a marriage that somehow only grew stronger with time.”

Sarah raised her glass immediately. “And to Julian still looking at his wife like a man completely possessed.”

“Because he is,” Helen informed everyone.

Julian’s mouth curved slightly. “Correct again.”

Laughter broke across the terrace once more.

Graham shook his head with amusement before finishing warmly, “Happy anniversary, Julian and Aurelia. May you have another twenty years of happiness.”

Glasses lifted around them.

“Happy anniversary!”

Aurelia barely managed a smile through the tears threatening to spill.

Julian turned toward her immediately, his entire focus sharpening with quiet concern and tenderness.

“You’re crying,” he murmured softly.

“You blame me for everything,” she whispered emotionally.

His expression softened completely then — all the power and authority stripped away until only love remained.

“Not everything,” he said quietly. “Only the best parts of my life.”

And with their family surrounding them, the ocean glittering beneath the tropical night, Julian lowered his head and kissed his wife while applause and laughter echoed warmly around them.

— The End —

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